



**ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE of ORANGE**

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
13280 CHAPMAN AVENUE, GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840

Dear brothers in the Lord,

Over the past year we as “the family of God” here in the State of California have joined with the elderly, sick and vulnerable to help educate Californian’s about the immense beauty life has to offer as we approach its end, and the inherent dangers, both material and transcendent, that come when physician assisted suicide become legal and is available. Our State wide coalition opposing assisted suicide (“Californians Against Assisted Suicide”) has worked to help people to understand that life’s worth is not measured solely by a person’s physical or economic contribution, but by how they share the gifts that they do possess. There are innumerable and unique blessings that can be realized in the twilight and sunset of one’s life – reconciling with family, surrendering to the finality of this world, and offering a powerful example of humility and trust.

Our Holy Father Francis has reminded us many times of the sanctity of human life and that our response to suffering as Catholics should center on accompaniment and care, rather than isolation. Pope Francis said during his address as part of the 2013 annual Day for Life in Britain and Ireland; “All life has inestimable value even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.” The concerns about this bill, and the opposition to it very much articulated a social justice perspective for the sick, the marginalized, the immigrants and those who have no insurance. Who decides who is to end their lives with this new legislation?

We suffered a setback in October when Governor Brown signed the assisted suicide law, after the bill had been stopped in the normal legislative session, and was then slipped through within a special session of the legislature, outside of the normal process.

The Bishops of California, including myself, have decided that we should not accept this legislation and should work to overturn it through the referendum process. Again, as the coalition demonstrated this past summer, this is not just a Catholic effort, but a broad based coalition of other faiths, and frankly “non-believers” as well. I humbly request your assistance in collecting signatures within your parish on the Feast of Christ the King, November 22, 2015 and the first Sunday of Advent, November 29. If you would like to collect signatures on any other day, please do so. Attached with this message are materials and more de-



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tails regarding this effort. Also, please consider using the homily resources provided here to be shared on the Feast of Christ the King. I humbly thank all of you for your homilies and reflections during this past spring. The suggestion of the homily at all of our Masses came from the Presbyteral Council itself. If you choose to preach again on this, that would be very appreciated and homily resources are included. What would be most important is to at least mention this referendum and encourage people to sign the petition so that the issue of physician assisted suicide can be voted on in next November's elections. I am very grateful for whatever you can do. During these Sundays we will be joined by many of our interfaith and ecumenical partners as well.

The practice of assisted suicide—by whatever name one calls it—sends a message that some lives are not worth living. The Bishops of California, in this next year, will also be placing an emphasis on reflections on life, suffering, and palliative and hospice care. As shepherds we are called to show the mercy and love of Christ to the world. I believe that this effort will help us demonstrate that we stand with the vulnerable and will tirelessly advocate for their needs.

Please join me in this important effort that will mark the beginning of the Year of Mercy. I am truly thankful to God for your ministry and walking together in this most critical and significant undertaking. Many of the Bishops in this country whom I know, and others in our Faith community are very grateful as well for your efforts and witness.

Fraternally yours in the Lord,

The Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann, JCD, DD
Bishop of Orange